

INTRODUCTION

This online publication comprises a selection of peer-reviewed versions of papers presented at *Archipelagos: Access, Connection and Separation*, the 4th International Small Island Cultures Conference, held in the Turku archipelago (south-western Finland) on June 17th-20th 2008. This event was organised by the Skärgårdsinstitut (Archipelago Institute) of Åbo Akademi University and the University of Turku, in conjunction with SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative).

This conference provided an interdisciplinary forum for scholars sharing a common interest in island cultures. In their presentations, participants explored a variety of ways in which island geographies, ecologies and histories have shaped human cultures, and vice versa. The number of papers in this proceedings publication is less than the previous years due to a coincidence of factors, including panelists' prior commitments to publishing their research in other media and the deferral of publication until elements additional to specific presentations have been completed. The collection presented here, while small in number on this occasion, reflects the range and diversity of material presented at the conference (and the range of work conducted in SICRI in general).

In this volume, authors examine the ecological impact of humans on island ecologies, as well as how geographic, social, political, economic and environmental factors related to identity can inform environmental policy. The commodification of cultural heritage and its role in regional economic development is discussed, as is the use of musical performance in the representation and construction of island identities. In line with the overarching theme of this conference, a key issue linking the contributions to this volume is that of core-periphery relations, particularly in terms of the material, cultural and linguistic relationships between islands and their adjacent islands and/or mainlands. Authors in this volume identify and explore tensions between accessibility and distinctiveness, insularity and connectivity, dependence and autonomy. The opportunities and challenges as well as the anxieties and celebrations that arise as a result of these tensions provide a fertile area for further enquiry.

Dr Jennifer Cattermole (Editor) for the SICRI Steering Committee (November 2008)